RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

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CHARACTERIZING THE CONDOMINIUM POPULATION OF THE GREATER OTTAWA AREA, 1969-2002

INTRODUCTION

Canada's housing stock currently consists of approximately 12,000,000 dwelling units, 6,800, 000 of which are single detached houses and the remaining 5,200,000 units are contained in semi-detached, duplex, walk-up and mid- to high-rise multi-unit residential buildings. Examination of the housing literature (paper and online) indicates that the number and characteristics of single detached houses are relatively well-documented, but that the number of multi-unit residential *buildings* is not yet known. While CMHC has detailed information on the number of buildings in the rental stock and keeps track of condominium project starts, it does not have complete records of the number of condominium projects that exist across the country. Thus, the number of multi-unit residential buildings in Canada is unknown. Accordingly, CMHC Policy and Research Division has been seeking cost-effective ways to characterize the stock of condominiums so that a more complete understanding of the entire stock of multi-unit residential buildings (rental and condominiums) can be established.

CMHC initiated a pilot project to determine if the condominium registration records kept on file at various sources could be used to establish the number of condominiums in Greater Ottawa by age, number of storeys and number of units. CMHC contracted with the University of Ottawa to have the condominium characterization project undertaken for the Greater Ottawa area.

RESEARCH PROGRAM

A project was undertaken to characterize the stock of condominiums in the Ottawa area. The project involved a two-phase research process. The first phase investigated the extent to which the condominium stock of Greater Ottawa can be represented by data from Ontario Land Registry Office (LRO) records. This part of the project consisted of three related tasks:

1. Ascertaining whether the LRO included the needed data in its records;
2. Ascertaining whether the needed data can be found in, and retrieved from, LRO records;
3. Assessing the degree of difficulty associated with each of the tasks in order to make recommendations to CMHC regarding future condominium characterization projects or programs.

The second phase of the work involved the extraction, recording and analysis of the information provided by the LRO regarding the stock of condominiums in the Ottawa area.

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FINDINGS

Upon initial review of a sampling of records at the Land Registry Office, it was determined that sufficient information was available in each file to determine the age of the structure, the number of units contained therein, and the number of storeys. However, by the end of the data extraction component of the work, it was found that the data was not as complete as possible. The extent to which the information at the Land Registry Office met the needs of study is described in Table 1. Although the data extraction process proved to be somewhat of a challenge for many files, complete characterization data was obtained for 95% of the 656 properties.

The project team discovered that the 656 condominiums ranged in function and type. Residential, commercial and mixed use condominiums were all included in the same files. Table 2 describes the project team's best estimate of the relative number of condominiums for each end use type. The estimate was based on the team's knowledge of the type of zoning in the areas where the condominiums are located.

Table 1. Basic Information on Condominium Plans for the Greater Ottawa Area on File at Ottawa Carleton Land Registry Office No. 4

1. Condominium plans registered, 1969 – 2002	656
2. Plans for which all needed data could be obtained	623
3. Condominium plans for which all data could not be obtained due to missing plans, missing parts of plans, or missing data	29
4. Confusing or unclear plans for which data are not included in the characterization profile	3
5. Condominiums registered but not constructed	1

Table 2. A Preliminary Estimate of the Types of Condominiums Registered in the Greater Ottawa Area, 1969 – 2002.

1. Condominium plans registered, 1969 – 2002	656
2. Plans for which all needed data could be obtained	606
3. Commercial condominiums	49
4. Mixed commercial/residential condominiums	1

A master database containing the information on each condominium project was created. An analysis of the age, number of units, number of storeys of the condominiums was undertaken. The following figures illustrate the major findings of the study.

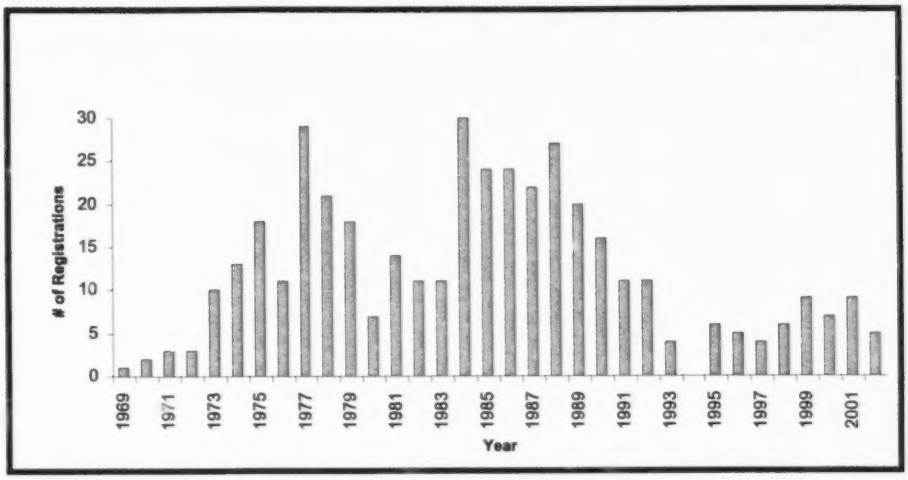

Figure 1: Condominium Registrations, Greater Ottawa, 1969-2002: Condominiums < 3.5 Levels

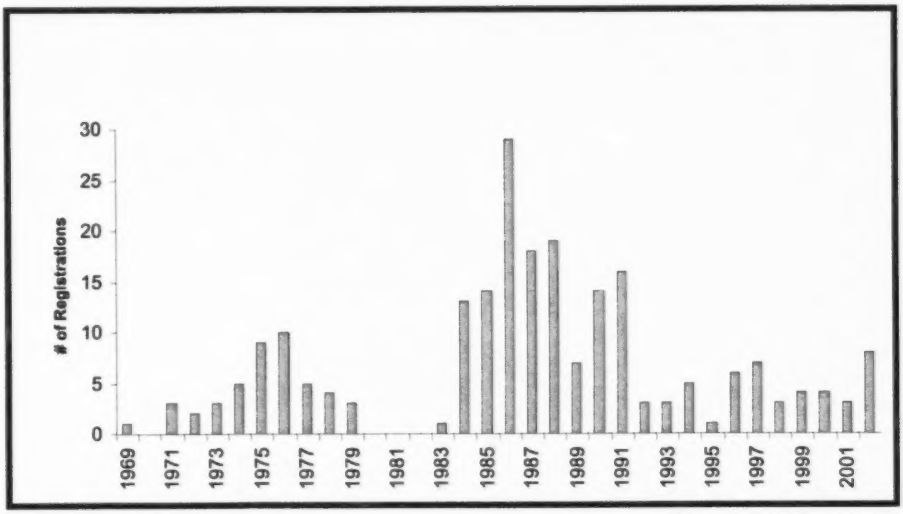

Figure 2: Condominium Registrations, Greater Ottawa, 1969-2002: Condominiums > 3.5 Levels

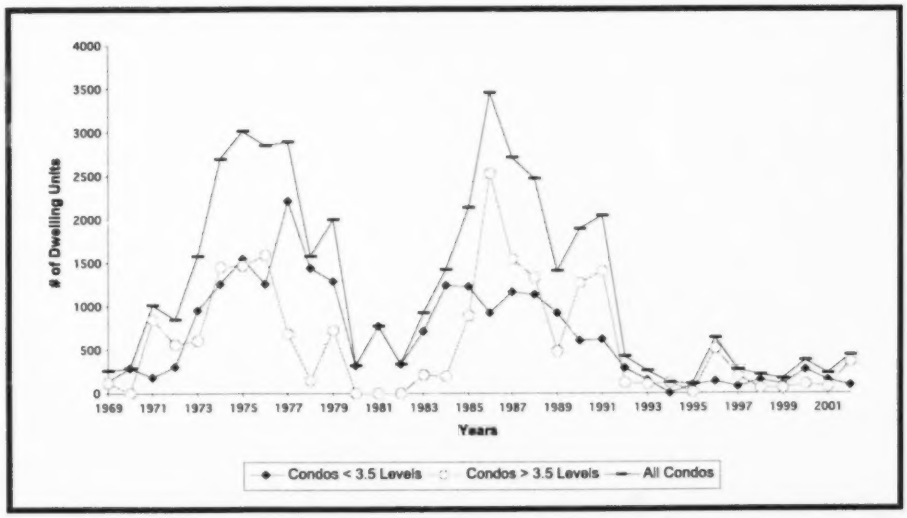

Figure 3: Registered Condominium Dwelling Units, Greater Ottawa, 1969-2002

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HOUSING INDUSTRY

This project demonstrated that it is possible to determine the population of condominiums in a given area where sufficient publicly available data exists. In the case of the Ottawa area, there was sufficient information on file at the Land Registry Office to characterize each condominium in terms of age, number of units and the number of storeys. However, the data extraction, interpretation and recording activities involved considerable difficulty for the majority of cases. There were considerable variations among registration plans in regard to the consistency, amount and quality of data that each contained on the condominium buildings. Further, the need to rely on manual as opposed to electronic means of accessing files and obtaining data compounded the problems experienced with the files themselves. As a result, deriving building characteristic data as elementary as age, number of storeys and number of units was not as straightforward as originally anticipated. As such information is necessary for any effort to quantify the number of multi-unit residential buildings in Canada, opportunities to standardize how information on condominium projects is collected, stored and reported should be further explored.

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Housing Research at CMHC

Under Part IX of the *National Housing Act*, the Government of Canada provides funds to CMHC to conduct research into the social, economic and technical aspects of housing and related fields, and to undertake the publishing and distribution of the results of this research.

This fact sheet is one of a series intended to inform you of the nature and scope of CMHC's research.

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